



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By: Sgt. Edward Eagerton

World War II veteran receives Silver Star, Purple Heart

CAMP DENALI, Alaska—Arthur W. Owens, a veteran of World War II, was awarded the Silver Star, the Purple Heart, and five other medals during a ceremony at the National Guard armory, Camp Denali, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Sept. 19.

Though Owens was authorized the medals 68 years ago, he was never presented with the recognition for his service during the war.

"The paperwork fell through the cracks," said Brig. Gen. Leon M. Bridges, assistant adjutant general of the Alaska Army National Guard. "Twenty-two million people served in uniform during World War II in the service of the United States. We have been finding over the years that some of them missed some of their due awards. That's what we're here to remedy."

Owens, a draftee who left the U.S. Army with the rank of Technical Sergeant, was originally awarded the Silver Star and the Purple Heart for his actions in the vicinity of Ludwigshafen, Germany, when his tank was hit by a shell from an anti-tank gun. After evacuating the tank, he discovered two of his crew were both still inside. Although his tank was still under fire, Owens made two trips back to pull his fellow Soldiers out and get them to safety.

"It brings tears to my eyes," Owens said. "It embarrasses me to a point. Why was I picked? But if people can see this and get some benefit from it, that it might help them, and not for the award, but accept that you're doing good."

It was in April when Owens reached out to the State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, looking for help in getting the Purple Heart he earned during the war.

"He's still got shrapnel in him," Bridges said.

"All of this came to our attention when Mr. Owens went to our service officer and requested credit for his Purple Heart," said Verdie Bowen, director of Veterans Affairs with the State of

Alaska. "In the Department of the Army system, there are eight different priority levels for veteran benefits. Having a Purple Heart bumps a veteran up to priority three."

With the help of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, chapter 593, and the DMVA, Owens's request was sent to the awards and decorations branch of the U.S. Army. When they reviewed his records, they discovered that not only had they never officially issued his Purple Heart, but also the Silver Star and the Army Good Conduct medals he had earned.

"They sent us back a letter on Aug. 14 signifying the official issue of these awards," Bowen said. "They instructed us to go to the adjutant general and have the awards presented."

After getting the good news, the group involved in helping Owens contacted the Alaska Army National Guard and scheduled the awards ceremony. At the ceremony, Owens was presented with the Silver Star, the Purple Heart, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with four Bronze Service Stars, the World War II Victory Medal and the Army of Occupation Medal with Germany Clasp.

"I'm really thankful for all the help," Owens said. "And I thank the Lord."

"We're still finding people who've gotten out of the military without receiving all of the recognition they deserve," Bowen said. "Our job is to keep the promise. Our motto is 'Serving Alaska one veteran at a time.' Last year we served 31,000 veterans. Doing this kind of award, this is the highlight of our year."

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Cutlines:

130919-Z-MW427-002

Medals are displayed on a table for an awards ceremony for Arthur W. Owens at the Alaska National Guard Armory, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Sept. 19. Owens, a veteran of World War II who left the U.S. Army at the rank of Technical Sergeant, was awarded the Silver Star, the Purple Heart and five other awards for his heroic actions on Mar. 23, 1945. Owens was authorized the awards during the war but never received them. With help of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, chapter 593, Owens was finally able to receive his awards after Secretary of the Army John McHugh officially signed them on Aug. 13. Alaska Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton

130919-Z-MW427-021

Brig. Gen. Leon M. Bridges, assistant adjutant general of the Alaska Army National Guard, gives a speech during an awards ceremony for Arthur W. Owens at the Alaska National Guard Armory, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Sept. 19. Owens, a veteran of World War II who left the U.S. Army at the rank of Technical Sergeant was awarded the Silver Star, the Purple Heart and five other awards for his heroic actions on Mar. 23, 1945. Owens was authorized the awards during the war but never received them. With help of the Military

Order of the Purple Heart, chapter 593, Owens was finally able to receive his awards after Secretary of the Army John McHugh officially signed them on Aug. 13. Alaska Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton

130919-Z-MW427-024

Brig. Gen. Leon M. Bridges, assistant adjutant general of the Alaska Army National Guard, gives a speech during an awards ceremony for Arthur W. Owens at the Alaska National Guard Armory, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Sept. 19. Owens, a veteran of World War II who left the U.S. Army at the rank of Technical Sergeant was awarded the Silver Star, the Purple Heart and five other awards for his heroic actions on Mar. 23, 1945. Owens was authorized the awards during the war but never received them. With help of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, chapter 593, Owens was finally able to receive his awards after Secretary of the Army John McHugh officially signed them on Aug. 13. Alaska Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton

130919-Z-MW427-036

Brig. Gen. Leon M. Bridges, assistant adjutant general of the Alaska Army National Guard, gives a speech during an awards ceremony for Arthur W. Owens at the Alaska National Guard Armory, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Sept. 19. Owens, a veteran of World War II who left the U.S. Army at the rank of Technical Sergeant was awarded the Silver Star, the Purple Heart and five other awards for his heroic actions on Mar. 23, 1945. Owens was authorized the awards during the war but never received them. With help of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, chapter 593, Owens was finally able to receive his awards after Secretary of the Army John McHugh officially signed them on Aug. 13. Alaska Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton

130919-Z-MW427-063

Brig. Gen. Leon M. Bridges, assistant adjutant general of the Alaska Army National Guard, presents Arthur W. Owens with the certificate for his Silver Star during an awards ceremony at the Alaska National Guard Armory, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Sept. 19. Owens, a veteran of World War II who left the U.S. Army at the rank of Technical Sergeant was awarded the Silver Star, the Purple Heart and five other awards for his heroic actions on Mar. 23, 1945. Owens was authorized the awards during the war, but never received them. With help of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, chapter 593, Owens was finally able to receive his awards after Secretary of the Army John McHugh officially signed them on Aug. 13. Alaska Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton

130919-Z-MW427-216

Kathy Erickson of Anchorage, Alaska, pins medals on her father, Arthur W. Owens, during an awards ceremony at the Alaska National Guard Armory, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Sept. 19. Owens, a veteran of World War II who left the U.S. Army at the rank of Technical Sergeant was awarded the Silver Star, the Purple Heart and five other awards for his heroic actions on Mar. 23, 1945. Owens was authorized the awards during the war but never received them. With help of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, chapter 593, Owens was finally able to receive his awards after Secretary of the Army John McHugh officially signed them on Aug. 13. Alaska Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton

130919-Z-MW427-255

Arthur W. Owens smiles during an awards ceremony at the Alaska National Guard Armory, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Sept. 19. Owens, a veteran of World War II who left the U.S. Army at the rank of Technical Sergeant was awarded the Silver Star, the Purple Heart and five other awards for his heroic actions on Mar. 23, 1945. Owens was authorized the awards during the war but never received them. With help of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, chapter 593, Owens was finally able to receive his awards after Secretary of the Army John McHugh officially signed them on Aug. 13. Alaska Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton